

Good Morning. My name is Miriam Thimm Kelle. I am a survivor. My brother, James Thimm, was gruesomely murdered through months of torture, 24 years ago. When I say tortured, please don't think I am exaggerating. His murder included shooting off his fingers one by one, keeping him tied outside to a deck with no coat to freeze in the winter cold, disemboweling him with a shovel, and more. No matter how much time goes by, it will always hurt to talk about my brother and all that pain he suffered.

But last year, I began to speak out despite the pain, because 20 years later my family continues to be a victim of this system. And I finally decided enough is enough.

Jim's killer, Michael Ryan, received the death penalty. When my brother was murdered I thought I was supposed to support the death penalty because that is what the state said was the right punishment. I loved my brother so much, and I thought that whatever justice the state could offer us was justice we should have.

Little did me and my family know then that when Michael Ryan was sentenced to death, we were sentenced too. Our sentence has been going on for 20 years and there has been no execution. For 20 years it has been all about Michael Ryan. He is all my family and I ever hear about. Jim is never mentioned. Only the continued talk about what Ryan deserves and not what me and my family need. Every appeal on, and on. Reading the horrible details again in the news year after year. Even after the execution, if it ever comes, it will be another day about Michael Ryan, and nothing about Jim.

My sister Karen sends flowers to Jim's grave every year for Valentine's Day. She says she will send them every year until this is over. She cannot rest either. My sister Audrey still supports the death penalty yet she too still suffers. She is so angry that this thing never ends. It has been horrible

for her and just adds to her pain. She wants it to be over and it never is. We all grew up in the Mennonite faith, a faith of peace. We have no peace.

Having seen what the death penalty has done to my family, I have since changed my mind and now think it should be abolished. I think the death penalty does absolutely nothing for victims except cause us more pain, and it prevents the state from doing other things that would really lead to less violence.

You may wonder why I would travel to Montana to tell you about my experience with the death penalty in Nebraska. Before I began speaking out, I thought that Nebraska's death penalty was the only one that hurt families so much. But in the last year I've met victim family members from other states and I've learned that Nebraska's problems are the same as every other state with the death penalty.

20 years after my brother was tortured to death the court in our state held that our means of execution was unconstitutional. Now we have to start all over again to fight about a new way to execute. Once again my brother's killer Michael Ryan is mentioned as a reason to keep fighting for the death penalty. The years of pain my family has gone through is never brought up by those fighting to keep it. What new court decisions will Montana families have to face in the coming years, while they wait for an execution that never comes?

Here in Montana you have an opportunity to take things in a different direction. You can stop talking about the Michael Ryans of Montana and start doing something for the families like mine. Take your Michael Ryans and lock them up and throw away the key, so they are forgotten, and spare the victims the pain of twenty years waiting for a false hope. Wondering when it will end, and for what cost. Enough is enough. Please vote for repeal of the death penalty.